

2001 State Meet...

# O'Connor well-prepared for first trip to state

Sophomore looks to set foundation for later success

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM  
Sports editor

Make no mistake, Brittany O'Connor is thrilled about her first trip to the state swim meet.

But the Fremont Ross sophomore may be one of the few first-timers not excited to the point of hyperventilation on the platform this weekend at C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton.

O'Connor knows from family experience that the initial state meet is for getting used to the whirling atmosphere and huge crowd.

O'Connor's older sister, Molly, finished 23rd out of 24 swimmers in the 100-yard freestyle during the first of her four trips to Canton. Three years later, she placed second in the state in

the 100 freestyle and third in the 200 freestyle.

That's why Brittany O'Connor has realistic goals for her two events. She'll swim the 50 freestyle preliminaries Friday morning and the 100 backstroke preliminaries Saturday morning in Division I competition.

"I just want to go down there and see what it's like," the younger O'Connor said during practice Tuesday at the middle school pool. "Everybody says it's so much fun. I hope next year I can make it back again."

"This is my first year. I know it's a lot different ... I'm really excited."

O'Connor and her coach, Phil Moran, are hoping for a berth in the top 16 in either or both of the events.

That would put O'Connor in the scoring column.

O'Connor has the 23rd best qualifying time in each event.

"Her goal should be to score, top 16," Moran said. "That would make her All-Ohio. That would be a good goal for the first year."

"It's always tough when you take them up there for the first time because you've got 4,000 people in the stands screaming. You can't breathe on the deck; you can't put your arm out without hitting somebody. It's that crowded. It's tough for a rookie swimmer to be focused."

Molly O'Connor, a 1998 graduate who is now a junior freestyler at the University of Kansas, still holds

See O'CONNOR, B3



News-Messenger/Ben French

**BRITTANY O'CONNOR** of Fremont Ross takes a break Tuesday during preparations for her first state swim meet this weekend. O'Connor will compete in the 50-yard freestyle and 100 backstroke at the C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton.

# O'Connor swims Friday at state

## Continued From B1

six Ross school records. She steadily improved at the state meet, finishing 11th in the 100 freestyle and 14th in the 50 freestyle as a sophomore and fifth in the 100 and ninth in the 50 as a junior.

Brittany said Molly has taught her "how to handle the pressure and not to get too nervous before a race. Just go out there and don't worry about the people around you and swim your race."

The last time Brittany attended a state meet, it was to watch Molly.

"I definitely think she saw her big sister do a lot of great stuff," Moran said of Brittany. "She knows what it takes. Once you make the state meet, you're a different kid. You act differently, you train differently. ... You're constantly being pushed to do your best during the season, which takes you to a new level."

Brittany O'Connor became the first Ross girls swimmer to qualify for state in the backstroke with an exciting second-place finish Saturday at the Division I district at Bowling Green State University.

She used a strong finish to record a time of one minute, 1.63 seconds and squeeze out Bowling Green freshman Angela Gellatly for the second and final automatic berth to state.

O'Connor said she created a mental picture of swimming the perfect race during practice last week.

"I had a very good taper," O'Connor said. "I've been working hard all season for districts. I really thought about finishing second and getting an automatic (bid). We did a lot of visualizing. I think that really helped."

O'Connor is also chasing the school's oldest girls swim record. The 100 backstroke record of 101.39, held for 19 years by Heather Winning, is the only Ross girls mark that has stood longer than five years.

While she didn't get an auto-

matic berth in the 50 freestyle, O'Connor got one of 14 at-large slots. Her qualifying time of 25.19 is only 19-hundredths of a second behind 16th-best qualifier Amanda Wittenmyer of Findlay.

Swimming begins at 9:30 a.m. Friday. The 50 freestyle preliminaries are the fourth event of the morning session. The 100 backstroke preliminaries are the fourth event of the Saturday morning session, which begins at 9 a.m.

## SANDUSKY MALL

# RV SHOW

THIS WEEK

Thurs.

22

10-9

Fri.

23

10-9

Sat.

24

10-9

Sun.

25

11-6



## UNITS ON DISPLAY

Young's RV, Fremont

Wilcart RV, Milan

Town & Country RV, Clyde

Fort Ball RV, Tiffin

## O'Connor swims for Ross at state

CANTON — Fremont Ross sophomore Brittany O'Connor finished 24th in the 50-yard freestyle Friday at the Division I state swim meet at Canton's C.T. Branin Natatorium.

O'Connor recorded a time of 25.69 seconds and finished last in the preliminaries. She did not qualify for the finals.

O'Connor will compete in the 100 backstroke today.

### State swimming

## O'Connor is 24th in 100 back for Ross

Staff, wire reports

CANTON — Brittany O'Connor got the experience she wanted at the Division I state swimming meet.

Now she'll go back to the drawing board and figure out how to move up the standings.

O'Connor, a Fremont Ross sophomore, finished 24th in the 100-yard backstroke Saturday at C.T. Branin Natatorium. She recorded a time of 1 minute, 3.46 seconds, her second best of the season.

On Friday, O'Connor finished 24th in the 50 freestyle in 25.69 seconds.

"I thought she did a good job," Ross coach Phil Moran said. "She handled it fairly well. She'll do better the next time she goes down there."

"She seemed pretty comfortable with making it. Now we'll sit down and set our goals a little differently."

O'Connor will compete in the 50 freestyle at a sectional meet sanctioned by U.S. Swimming on March 16-17 at Miami University.

The defending champions at the state swimming and diving championships all repeated Saturday, including Cincinnati St. Xavier, which won its record 23rd title.

St. Xavier won seven of 12 events in the two-day tournament at Branin Natatorium and outscored second-place Centerville 333-171.5.

In the girls competition, Cincinnati Ursuline won six of 12 events in Division I, beating second-place Cincinnati St. Ursula 322-191. Gates Mills Hawken topped Chardon Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin 373-155 in Division II.

Seven state records were set, including two by Jayme Cramer of St. Xavier. He won his third straight 100-yard backstroke title Saturday with a time of 47.65 seconds, breaking the 48.15 record time he set last year.

Erin Forster of Centerville tied a state record of 56 seconds in the 100 backstroke in Division I.

In Division II, Kelly Jones of Ketting Alter broke the 100 breaststroke record she set last year.

Chagrin Falls' Lauren Preyss set records in the 100 and 200 freestyles.

Tami Ransom of Ursuline won the 200-yard individual medley — her third straight title. She also defended her 100-yard freestyle title.



O'CONNOR